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# Productive History: Sustainable Downtown Revitalization Using Historic Preservation

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# **Productive History: Sustainable Downtown Revitalization Using Historic Preservation**

**A Culmination of Three Courses.**

Three Course Option Final Project

By:

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Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning

Spring 2016

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## Table of Abbreviations

BOMA BESt	Building Owners and Managers Association: Building Environmental Standards
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CED	Community Economic Development
LCA	Life Cycle Assessment
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
PDR	Purchase of Development Rights
RTC	Rehabilitation Tax Credit
TDR	Transfer of Development Rights

## Introduction

For my final research project in the Master of Regional Planning program, in the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, I have decided to undertake the three course option. My topic is in the revitalization of downtown using historic preservation and sustainable strategies. Along with three courses that cover one of the aspects of my topic, I shall complete a research paper that includes a literature review on sustainable downtown revitalization using historic preservation.

## Gap in Knowledge

When I started graduate school at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, I knew that I wanted to become a city planner. I had a plan to take specific courses throughout my two years in the program, and two of them were part of my three course option. I started my first semester by taking a course that has been instrumental to my career in planning, tools and techniques of planning. This class set the bar for me to know all the technical terms and planning processes that would refine my skill set on my way to my career.

It is safe to say that before I started my time in the Regional Planning program, I was not well versed in the terminology that is common in the planning world. Coming from a background in business management, I surprisingly knew a lot more about planning than I originally thought. There is so much in planning that deals with communicating with other people, co-workers, employees, customers, the public, this is where my experience in the business world has given me an advantage. Learning the technical side of planning was the only thing that I was missing, the rest I learned while taking business courses on how to run an organization. With this in my back pocket, my planning classes and planning experiences have taught me how to be an effective planner.

During my time in the Regional Planning program, I learned a lot about the “hard” skills that planners use, such as zoning, development processes, growth management, and economic development strategies. My three course option project has given me the opportunity to hone in on some areas that I did not get the chance to completely dive into during my first three semesters at UMass. The two topics that I chose to study for this paper are historic preservation and sustainable strategies for cities. My interest and experience with economic development courses

brought me to look at these two topics and intertwine them into a cohesive strategy. For the three course option I have taken three courses, two in the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning program, and an independent study in the Architecture Department. The following section will review these courses, and why I chose them.

## The Three Courses

The courses that I have chosen to take are 1) Downtown Revitalization with Dr. John Mullin, 2) Sustainable Cities with Dr. Mark Hamin, and 3) An independent study on the History and Theory of Preservation in the Architecture Department taught by Dr. Max Page. I am taking an independent study on historic preservation due to the fact that Dr. Page is not teaching the class this semester, but the study is based on the syllabus from previous years. The knowledge that I gain from these courses will be combined into this paper and supplemented with a literature review.

## Course Descriptions

### **Downtown Revitalization (REGIONPL 591K-01), Dr. John R. Mullin, FAICP**

Professor Mullin will be teaching about the core vitals of New England's downtowns and how to revitalize those using different techniques. The course will include lectures, fieldwork, guest presentations and seminars. The readings and lectures in this course will present students the critical problems, and show the opportunities to show how to revitalize them. The course goals are; 1) To gain an understanding of the evolution of downtowns in New England, from the first settlements through the present, 2) To master the tools and techniques that are required to maintain and revitalize New England's downtowns, 3) To apply the techniques to case situations and create methods that will assist communities in their efforts to improve their downtowns.

What interested me in this course came from my economic development courses in the past and my curiosity of downtowns in general. Growing up in New England I got to see a lot of downtowns, but not many of them were large cities. I wondered how much of a difference there is between revitalization efforts in small towns versus larger cities.

### **Sustainable Cities (REGIONALPL 580-01), Dr. Mark Hamin.**

This course will introduce me to the 3-E concept of sustainability: environment, economy, and equity. This course will teach me how to apply these concepts to the built environment as well as how to analyze the policies at different geographic levels. The course goals read as follows:

‘Sustainability’ is a concept and approach that has become more prevalent in ecological, economic and equity discussions over the last several decades, yet its historical and cultural roots are far more extensive than has been usually recognized. This course aims to examine + evaluate core principles and practices identified by advocates as well as adversaries of sustainability, and address a variety of questions related to sustainability: the appropriate spatial and temporal scale of sustainable planning and design; the full scope of which systems and standards are best suited for achieving sustainable outcomes; the relative roles of ‘high’ vs. ‘low’/‘hard’ vs. ‘soft’ science and technology paths; expertise ↔ efficiency ↔ equity; individual vs. collective responsibilities; and the interdependence of ecology, economy, empowerment/engagement in civic revitalization.

My interest in this course came from the researching of various different cities around North America. I noticed that many of them had included sustainability or climate change plans for the future of their cities. I took this course seeing it as an opportunity to gain critical knowledge of an aspect in planning that is becoming extremely prominent.

### **Independent Study in Historic Preservation (ARCH 696D), Dr. Max Page**

This independent study will follow the course syllabus from the 2016 spring semester. The course description I will learn the fundamental theories and history of preservation. The course will focus on the United States and tell a story of the historic preservation movement. I acquired this syllabus from a classmate who took the class during the spring semester of 2015. I will gain knowledge from readings and lectures during the class and examine relevant examples of historic preservation in the world today.



My interest in historic preservation came from a course on urban design and it gave me an interest in architecture in general. Along with an interest in taking a course in the architecture department was my interest in adaptive reuse of buildings, which is an economic development technique that I had learned in previous courses.

I plan to learn the original guiding principles and theory of historic presentation, the three E's of sustainability: Environment, Economy, and Equity, as well as different ways to revitalize downtowns. The gap in knowledge that I am trying to fill is showing how historic structures can be used as anchors to revitalize a downtown using sustainable techniques

I chose these three courses because of my interests in economic development and specifically the revitalization of downtowns. I chose the other two courses in historic preservation and sustainability because they are two topics that I did not have a lot of experience in. The environment is a constant concern and learning how to manage cities sustainably using these techniques is something that I find important.

## Literature Review

### Introduction

Historic preservation is a technique that has been used to preserve and maintain buildings and districts in the United States since shortly after it became a country in the late 1800s. The practice started as an effort to save individual monuments around the country to preserve the historic past, and evolved into a practice used for preserving not only the historical quality of buildings, but also to incorporate groupings of buildings into historic districts. Many preservation organizations and efforts became prominent throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and when the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was signed into law, this legislation created the National Register of Historic Places, the State Historic Preservation Offices, and a list of National Historic Landmarks. Upon designation into the National Register of Historic Places, buildings become easier to preserve because they are deemed historically significant under one or more of four criteria. This brings up aspects of historic preservation that may not have been part of the initial plan such as the environmental, economic, and social opportunities and threats to the current process.

In this literature review, historic preservation has been researched under three lenses; environmental, economic, and social. The environmental aspect, which argues that existing historic buildings are just as, if not more sustainable than new construction. The economic development aspect of this review looks into historic tax credits and the adaptive reuse of existing buildings. Finally, this review looks into the social aspect of this review looks at possible effects of gentrification and exclusion of historic properties.

This literature review explores the effects and manifestations of historic preservation policies on cities today. The relationship between preservation and planning is one that can help facilitate comprehensive strategies through efficient and up to date regulations. Using readings from the syllabuses of my three courses and online databases including Academic Search Premier, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, I have selected readings that explore all three of these facets of historic preservation. The themes of this research are, the environmental qualities of historic preservation, the economic opportunities of historic preservation, and the social equities of historic preservation. By understanding these themes planners can make better decisions for their communities for each of these three facets.

Following this introduction the review will be the section that explores the environmental qualities of historic preservation. Next the review will look at the economic development and revitalization qualities of historic preservation. The section following will explore the social aspects of historic preservation. Lastly, I shall conclude with an area, where data is lacking and where new research should be addressed.

### Environmental Historic Preservation

In this section I will discuss the environmental qualities of historic preservation. In the *Green Building* chapter of Mark Roseland's book, "Towards Sustainable Communities" he discusses multiple techniques on how green building practices can help to make neighborhoods more sustainable. Carl Elefante examines the enormous challenges of green visions for communities when it comes to existing buildings and neighborhoods. Kathryn Rogers Merlino examines an alternative approach to historic preservation that promotes these buildings as repositories of energy. If you look at these buildings as sunk cost, meaning that the cost is already made, then it would also be in the best interest to try and recover as much as you can from these

costs without incurring more lost money. Collectively these papers will reveal that there are environmental and energy implications of all historic buildings within the existing layouts of cities.

Roseland wrote this chapter to look closely at buildings as a key component of communities' physical capital, define green building and review various certification systems, explore the convergence of green building and affordable housing and discuss how green buildings are undergoing a reconceptualization as living buildings. Roseland mentions different green building certification systems including; Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), and Building Owners and Managers Association: Building Environmental Standards (BOMA BEST) have been recognizing historic and existing structures as a positive green building technique. Next he writes about certifications at the neighborhood scale and retrofitting existing buildings, including energy and water retrofits to make the existing building more "green". Green materials are also mentioned in this chapter to show that there are more environmentally and financially friendly ways to construct or retrofit buildings. Lastly Roseland writes how one can include these practices into legal codes, and regulations, while also creating financial incentives to build this way.

Some cities (Vancouver, British Columbia, Scottsdale, Arizona, and Portland, Oregon) have required all new constructions projects to be LEED Certified. Only three cities in North America have done this in order to make an effort to be more sustainable which is setting the development standard high, and could either attract high quality developments, or discourage developers from investing. There is also the idea of "green leases" where a lease includes a section on energy use and shared goals for reduction, so that the landlord or tenant is not totally responsible for the energy waste of a building. This chapter focuses almost entirely on new construction projects, while only mentioning existing buildings in one short section, although many of these techniques can be applied to existing buildings through retrofitting.

Elefante asks, "Can sustainability be achieved if our green vision extends only to new buildings, ignoring the enormous challenges of existing buildings and communities?" (p.27). There are some 65 billion square feet of existing nonresidential building space in the country, and by 2030 it is estimated another 28 billion square feet will be added via new construction. Elefante reiterates the title of this article and emphasizes that "The Greenest Building is... One That is

Already Built”, by taking into account the massive investment of materials and energy in existing buildings. Elefante mentions the building life-cycle and how buildings should be made to last, not built with parts that cannot be fixed without replacement, like modern day windows. Lastly he writes that preservationists must accept the need to improve energy performance in historic buildings and begin to implement renewable energy systems in these buildings.

Elefante brings to attention the relative lack of difficulty that it takes to retrofit historic buildings with energy efficient utility infrastructure. Elefante declares that our culture is drunk on the new and now, and that intoxication clouds judgment, which leads to us undervaluing the past (p. 36). Elefante states that the greening of existing buildings, including important historic structures, is gaining recognition in green building circles including the American Institute of Architects (AIA) as well as the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) (p. 32). Elefante concludes by proclaiming, that as preservation teaches us to better value our past, it is his hope and prayer that it also helps us to fully awaken to our responsibilities to the future, which he states is the unbreakable bond between preservation and sustainability.

Merlino focuses on an alternative approach to preserve historic buildings other than through historic and architectural standards. The author writes, “the past few years has seen a growing body of research that positions buildings in another way: as repositories of energy worth preserving for their environmental value in addition to their (or despite their lack of) cultural significance” (p. 72). Merlino writes that buildings are great repositories of “embodied energy” which is the energy spent to extract, transport, manufacture and construct a structure” (p. 78), and a study by the National Trust’s Preservation Green Lab concludes that it takes 10 to 80 years for a new building that is 30% more efficient than an average building to overcome the negative climate change impacts related to the construction process (pp. 80-81). She notes how buildings can be sustainable in a quantifiable manner by using life cycle assessment (LCA) by evaluating the potential environmental and human health impacts associated with products and services throughout their life cycles. Merlino finishes with a quote incorporating the importance of sustainable historic preservation saying, “Environmentalism is as critical as preserving our history is necessary” (p. 85).

Merlino further legitimizes the use of historic preservation as a sustainability approach. It has laid out different studies that have shown that historic buildings are physical manifestations of

energy. In a study by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the U.S. pre-1920 commercial building stock performs at the same level as buildings from 2003, which disproves outdated perceptions that older buildings are poor energy performers, compared to newer buildings (p. 78). Merlino brings up issues about what happens when a building isn't historically or structurally significant? Historic preservation is one of the most prominent ways of avoiding the demolition of older buildings, but buildings that don't quite make the cut are usually the first ones to fall. Environmentalism should be an outlet for preserving the common historic building, and preventing the heavy environmental costs of demolition and new construction.

From the examination of these papers on the environmental qualities of historic preservation, the research demonstrates that in the current state of green building practices, the use of historic structures needs to be promoted. We have learned that there is energy that is embodied into these buildings from materials and energy worked into their walls, so to demolish and rebuild them, would be an enormous cost for the environment, energy, and history. One thing that needs to be said is that in order to retrofit these buildings there may need to be significant changes to the integrity and authenticity of historic buildings. Overall these strategies seem to check all of the boxes of environmental sustainability but I ask, at what point has a building run its course? My professional experiences in the City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts has shown me that developers tend not to care about the embodied energy in a historic building and if it is more profitable for them to raze and build new, then they will do that, regardless of what is best for the community and environment. Retrofitting these buildings may be an extremely high cost for a developer, especially in very old buildings, and adding these "improvements" may seriously affect the authenticity and integrity of the historic building. In conclusion, the environmental qualities of historic preservation have the opportunities to make the building something worth saving.

### Economics of Historic Preservation

This section will explore the economic aspects of historic preservation, focusing on different techniques that have shown to improve and revitalize cities. In Mark Roseland's chapter titled *Community Economic Development* he writes about using community economic development as a strategy that focuses on the development of communities, not only on growth. Barry Cullingworth and Roger Caves look at historic preservation and its evolution from preserving landmarks to a planning perspective on cultural matters, and show how the transfer of

development rights (TDR) could help preserve historic buildings. Stephanie Ryberg-Webster examines rehabilitation tax credits (RTCs) and analyzes how they have affected 10 downtowns throughout the United States. Myrna M. Breitbart and Cathy Stanton propose an economic development approach for small New England cities and investigate the culture industry using tourism and heritage. These papers will reveal that the economic factors in preserving historic buildings in cities, and especially their downtown have a positive effect on their communities.

Mark Roseland follows his chapter on Green Buildings with this chapter on community economic development (CED) as an alternative approach to an economy that primarily focuses on growth, rather than development. By prioritizing sustainable CED, citizens and their governments choose economic development that provides opportunities for people of different incomes and skills, promotes a better quality of life and protects the environment. He begins by mentioning green businesses, which include environmental stewardship, pollution control, and resource efficiency as economic opportunities, not burdens. Local self-reliance is one of the strategies for helping communities become more sustainable by keeping money revolving throughout the local economy more times instead of leaking out of the area to another economy. Roseland writes about many different strategies to make the economy more feasible for a small business owner, such as downtown development authorities, revolving loan funds, and reinvestment policies. He also states tools and financial incentives for helping the economy become a more sustainable one, such as training programs and business clusters. Although Roseland makes it apparent that there are many different strategies, he does not mention which ones are best.

This chapter in this book compares to research that I have done by showing that almost every outcome of planning can become more sustainable. Not only does it involve the “greening” of jobs, but it also takes the equity aspect of sustainability and focuses on how everybody can benefit and be involved in the local economy. It also compares because a city can use these strategies for small businesses and economic development and place them inside either older buildings or new, “green” buildings that have been built within a city’s downtown.

Cullingworth and Cave’s chapter focuses on “the evolution from a simple approach to the historic preservation of landmarks toward a ‘planning perspective’ on cultural matters” (p. 221). Cullingworth and Caves begin with a historical look at the beginnings of the preservation movement that started with predominantly private endeavors to save individual structures and

sites, and goes on to give examples on how historic preservation can be an asset to communities by adaptively reusing historic buildings such as Faneuil Hall in Boston, and Union Station in Washington. The legal grounds of preservation are captured in this chapter, as well as economic strategies for communities such as historic tax credits, and air rights/the transfer of development rights (TDR). Lastly the chapter mentions how tourism can be an asset like the Downtown heritage trail in Washington, DC, and a liability for historic and cultural sites, where a community would like to promote the site for tourists but don't want the site to be overrun and damaged by the large amount of crowding like in New Orleans and Paris.

This chapter compares to other research I have done by showing the economic viability of historic structures in adaptive reuse. Although the authors never specifically mention the sustainability factors of historic preservation they allude to the fact that tools such as TDR or the purchase of development rights (PDR) can protect and preserve agricultural and open space, this is proven by the fact that the development rights from a sending zone, are sold to a property in a receiving zone, allowing the receiving zone to develop more densely, and protecting the sending zone from any further development on the site. This chapter explains how historic tax credits energized the preservation movement from 1976-1989 where 21,000 historic buildings were rehabilitated. With tax credits almost \$14 billion of private investment was used to rehabilitate these buildings.

Ryberg-Webster asks the question, "Do historic rehabilitation tax credits (RTCs) play a central force in ongoing urban revitalization?"(p.266). The author uses case studies of 10 cities across the United States ranging from shrinking central cities like St. Louis, Missouri, and Cleveland, Ohio, to moderately positive turnaround in central cities like Atlanta, Georgia, and Providence, Rhode Island, to strong positive turnaround in central cities like, Denver, Colorado, and Portland, Oregon. Ryberg-Webster analyzes the effect of federal RTCs in the downtowns. The federal RTCs are strictly for historically significant, income-producing buildings, which has made the adaptive reuse of existing nonresidential buildings into for-rent properties viable. The author has found that there were 466 RTC investments amounting to more than \$3.6 billion dollars in the 10 cities between 2001 and 2010, showing the transformation of the postindustrial downtown by showing that the struggling central cities like Cleveland and St. Louis are receiving large amounts of RTC investment that contrast to citywide population and economic decline. Ryberg-

Webster has shown that federal RTCs have increased the number of housing units downtown, while also increasing the number of low-income housing units by adding them in traditionally nonresidential buildings, adding to the housing diversity without displacing existing low-income housing because the buildings didn't house residences in the first place.

Ryberg-Webster shows that there is an economic impact in rehabilitating these historic buildings. Some questions are that this type of revitalization could essentially occur without planners, but it is up to the city planner to make sure that regulatory barriers can be eliminated such as, being able to have housing units in industrial zoning districts. Another limitation to federal RTCs is that they can give the real estate sector power in determining what to preserve, which may result in historic structures being overlooked or deemed not profitable. Currently the federal RTCs cannot be used for owner-occupied units, which as Ryberg-Webster writes is "an essential element of any area with robust housing choices" (p. 276). Ryberg-Webster has shown that historic preservation in a downtown can be legitimized in quantitative, and qualitative terms by using RTCs, but also it shows that there are ways that it can be improved.

Breitbart and Stanton propose an economic development approach on small New England cities. This approach investigates the 'culture industry' workers whose labor is an integral part of cultural tourism and culture-led regeneration projects. The authors cover a case study located in Lowell, Massachusetts where historic buildings were preserved in the once industrialized downtown and adaptively reused for the for the incoming creative economy. This chapter noted that many of the ideas that sparked these revitalization efforts did not come from high paid consultants, but were merely "stolen" from neighboring communities. It also mentioned the importance of risk takers to invest money into these old buildings, so that these cities can enable their citizens to thrive with innovation.

The Breitbart and Stanton chapter compares to other research by reinforcing the idea of adaptively reusing buildings in a downtown in order to create economic engines. Breitbart and Stanton show that cities can not only be innovative and create new councils and strategies for themselves, but can also use their neighbors and generate ideas from them as well. The borrowing of ideas from nearby communities acts exactly like business clusters, where the flow of information can be used to help each other.



From the examination of these papers on both the qualitative and quantitative effects that historic preservation has on the economy of a city. The economic positives of historic preservation do not tell the whole story. From my experience in Pittsfield, a developer purchased a locally historic school and demolished it to build a Dunkin Donuts restaurant, the character value that the building possessed was enough for the community to want to save it, unfortunately there was no feasible proposal put forward in time and the building was razed. The Dunkin Donuts wanted to have a drive-thru window, but the City does not allow drive-thru windows without a special permit, and denied the permit to the developer because it was seen to be a suburban development in an urban downtown and now the historic school that was once there, lays as a pile of cement in the center of town. The adaptive reuse of these historic buildings may take away from the actual history of these cities, changing the authenticity of the structure to fit a modern day need. Although historic district designation may benefit the economy in a city by adding to the housing stock, it may also destroy and price out a culture that has lived in that area for a long time. Ensuring that gentrification does not occur could be very difficult without proper plans for the development of historic districts.

### Social Equity in Historic Preservation

In this section, I examine social issues that can be attributed to historic preservation. David B. Fein examines how historic districting has undesirable effects on low-income and minority residents. Alison Hoagland looks at the leniency of historical significance in historic company housing settlements. Peter Bullen and Peter Love inspect Australian practitioners' views and experiences with the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings within the sustainability context. All together these papers will reveal historic preservation should address the social qualities of cities and not just the architecture.

David B. Fein examines historic preservation practices as becoming one of the most important land use tools in urban areas, rivaling that of zoning regulations. He writes about the adverse effects of historic districting, how historic preservation can have undesirable consequences, such as gentrification, that outweigh the positive public contributions such as offering educational and cultural opportunities for the public. Historic districts are often old residential areas of cities that are occupied primarily by poor and minority residents and once designation is acquired, it attracts developers and investors to the neighborhoods. Fein states

“Competition among those interested in profiting from designation inflates property prices, thereby initiating or accelerating the process of “gentrification” (p. 6). He finishes his article on how municipalities and preservation organizations can and should work for finding ways to both preserve historic districts and avoid displacement of low-income and minority communities.

From this article Fein writes that there is a revitalization proponent to historic district designation, as with designation comes attraction for developers and investors to make a profit. As we see that historic districting does have an economic impact the author recognizes that with revitalization, comes gentrification. The social inequalities of this type of land use control may create exclusion and gentrification that could irreparably damage a “historic” community. Fein shows that there are other outcomes of historic preservation that are not always positive. Lastly Fein states that in order for historic districting to avoid these negative aspects, preservation proponents, legislators and judges must; 1) recognize that there is an unwanted consequence of designation, 2) that they should implement innovative controls to prevent the misuse of historic districting, and 3) that courts should more closely scrutinize preservation commissions decisions to ensure they comply with enabling legislation and state and federal constitutions.

Alison Hoagland examines historical significance during the three stages of the preservation life of a building, specifically, company housing, and how preservationists can be more flexible in their standards. The first phase is when the structures are built and go through the period of significance, the next phase starts when the building is nominated for historical significance, and the final phase is the buildings life after the designation. Hoagland writes that there are some aspects of a preservationists standards that are more flexible than others, for instance the addition of vinyl siding to the exterior of these houses, due to the economic realities of the people occupying those homes. Hoagland writes, “(preservationists) hold fast to their standards when confronted with differences of culture and class, but are more lenient when faced with political and economic realities” (p. 124). The author argues that the exterior of buildings is privileged over the interior, when in reality, the historical significance of these buildings is revolving around the interior of the house, and the massing of them around each other.

The Hoagland paper relates to other research that I have done because it deals with exterior additions to historic buildings and shows how when it comes to the quality of a person’s life in a home where there is no bathroom, that there can be flexibility in historical significance. This

article is not about the adaptive reuse of these buildings but it does display that historical significance can be flexible when it comes to the exterior of a building, if what makes the building historically significant, is not the aesthetic quality of the exterior of the building. Hoagland expresses that “no one wants to stand in the way of providing basic services for people in need. Politically, it would be unwise for preservationists to hold fast to their rules in the faces of such dire need” (p. 123).

Bullen and Love examine Australian practitioners’ views and experiences associated with adaptive reuse of heritage buildings within the context of urban regeneration<sup>1</sup>, conservation, and sustainability. The authors conducted 60 semi-structured interviews with practitioners around Australian stakeholder groups to investigate their understanding of the sustainability issues associated with the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. Barriers to adaptive reuse relate to the cost, as it was perceived that it was more economical to demolish a building than to reuse it, as well as the energy efficiency of the older buildings concern efficient heating, insulation, and low impact materials. The stakeholders made apparent that the ability to make the reuse of heritage buildings attractive to developers relies heavily on the introduction of legislation that reduces building code and planning requirements, and offers substantial incentives in the form of tax concessions. Bullen and Love mention that social, economic, and environmental sustainability are all very important factors in this group of stakeholders, and due to that, it is preferable for residents to reuse heritage buildings rather than replace them with new construction.

Like the other research this article looks at the connections between the economic and the environmental approaches to historic preservation. This article adds in the other aspect of historic preservation which is the social aspect where heritage buildings are preserved for the social qualities that they contain. Although it did not mention gentrification and affordable housing, this article made it apparent that people in Australia feel a stronger sense of connection with their surroundings through heritage buildings, which Bullen and Love say is not generally associated with new construction. Unlike Australia, the United States does have a program in which will financial incentives are a big part, federal and state Rehabilitation Tax Credit (RTC) which are tax

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<sup>1</sup> Urban regeneration is meant to mean urban revitalization.

credits given to developers for the rehabilitation of buildings with varying levels of historic significance.

From the examination of these papers on the social qualities of historic preservation, the research demonstrates that although there is social benefit from historic preservation such as educational and cultural histories, there can also be large unintended consequences. Gentrification is something that is almost always a bad thing, but with it comes economic prosperity for a neighborhood that could be vital in the bigger picture of the economy of a struggling city. The research has also shown that there are more important qualities of historic preservation than just economic and environmental ones, sense of feeling that residents have to a place is stronger when they have ties to historic buildings. Finally, historic significance is something that can be flexible when it comes to designation, especially when the social wellbeing of an entire community is involved. In conclusion, these buildings and districts are more than just environmental and economic assets, they are cornerstones of communities.

Looking back at my experiences in Pittsfield, I see that there is room for cautious gentrification in planning. It is not a good thing for a city to have nothing but blighted neighborhoods, and this is something that Pittsfield is struggling with. Having the diversity within the city is vital to its vibrancy and having luxury housing, market rate housing, and affordable housing interspersed throughout the city is a good thing to have. When I say that gentrification is almost always a bad thing, what I mean is that displacement is almost always a bad thing.

## Conclusions

Overall what I have learned through this literature review on historic preservation is that there are other qualities of historic preservation other than aesthetic beauty. Extant historic buildings have a tremendous amount of embodied energy built inside of them. Taking into account all of the energy and materials that went into building them, the energy and material loss that would go into razing them, and the amount of energy and materials that would go into building a new structure is extremely significant. Although the possibility of retrofitting historic buildings to use more “green” materials is an option for the majority of these buildings, the feasibility of doing so can make or break a developer’s budget on whether or not to rehabilitate these buildings. When it comes down to it, I believe that historic buildings, whether they are significant or not should be at the very least attempted to be preserved. I know that not every single building will be saved, but

those that take up a significant portion of land, and those that have the ability to be reused and renovated should be given that opportunity. With all of this being said, there is opportunity to establish an environmental criteria in order to help preserve buildings that may or may not be historically significant.

When it comes to the economic impacts for historic preservation, I have learned that the literature has shown that these buildings and districts can be a part of the greater revitalization of cities and towns. Adaptive reuse can add to the housing diversity in ways that include affordable units and market rate units, as well as add retail and office mixed-use projects within the city's existing neighborhoods. Along with this there are financial incentives for historic structures in rehabilitation tax credits that can help lighten the initial costs of development. Although the adaptive reuse is a great way to boost the economic opportunities for historic buildings, it also can take a toll on the historic authenticity of the communities that the structures represent. Balancing history and economic development within preservation is something for the local government and residents to make sure materializes in the right fashion.

From this review of the social aspect of historic preservation I have learned that community matters. When a village is historic because of the way that it was built, preservationists can be flexible in designating a district that has made aesthetic changes to the exterior of houses because the significance of the properties lies within how they are laid out, not in how they look. I have also learned that the gentrification of historic districts can be avoided with work done by legislators, preservation proponents, and municipalities by using innovative techniques to be more inclusive such as covenants for affordable housing, and non-displacement policy. Lastly, historic preservation has been shown to give residents a stronger sense of place in their communities. There are positives and negatives of all of these qualities, for instance, gentrification is usually the product of a revitalized community, and so this fine line must be addressed and processed properly in order to do no harm.

Overall, from this literature review, I have learned that the sustainability of a community can be helped and hurt by historic preservation tactics. Further research could be prompted to look at all three aspects of this literature review and conduct a study incorporating the environmental, economic, and social sustainability roles of historic preservation. Another subject that could be included in this type of study could be the effect of federal and state brownfield money on extant

historic sites that are contaminated by the previous use. The brownfield part could be argued for all three parts of this literature review (environmental, economic, and social). Historic preservation is one way of showing that cities can be responsible for the environment, economy, and social wellbeing of their communities.

## The Process

I started off my final semester with my final research project ahead of me, I knew my topic, I knew what I needed to do, and I began my research by diligently attending my classes and taking a large amount of notes. The process that I undertook was to take a topic that I knew, economic development, and apply the other two topics to it. Taking economic development strategies specifically associated with downtown revitalization and using sustainable and historic preservation strategies. What I did to begin my paper, was find five pieces of literature from the syllabuses, and research five other peer reviewed articles to create the literature review. This section of the paper will address what I learned throughout the semester, and it will address what my overall thoughts on the topic.

Sustainable downtown revitalization using historic preservation, narrowing down this field into something that can be applied to any community that has existing historic buildings scattered across its downtown. Historic preservation has many qualities, from the literature review you can see that it has the possibility of being an environmental initiative, an economic stimulator, and a cornerstone of social equity. The following sections will show what I have learned throughout this research oriented process.

What I learned was that historic preservation can be more than just history. From the literature review you can see that there is an environmental impact of old buildings. There is enormous energy that has been built up into these buildings and that alone has an environmental impact. Using historic preservation as a sustainable initiative, a community can take inventory of their existing buildings and use them as demonstration projects to show developers the extent of these buildings capabilities. It only takes one to create an attraction to developers to want to retrofit these buildings with new environmentally friendly infrastructure and utilities.

The fact that these buildings are full of energy could be a deciding factor in whether or not these buildings will be slated for razing. As many communities know, there are many buildings

that have been lost to demolition because they were deemed obsolete. Historic preservation has long been utilized for its ability to stave off demolition, but what makes this interesting is that the only way that the buildings can be saved, is if their historic significance is worthy of designation. Merlino (2014) says that other than designating buildings strictly on their historical and/or architectural merit, that there should be the possibility of preserving a building based on the environmental opportunities of containing the embodied energy of these buildings that may not be “historic”.

According to Roseland (2012), older buildings generally have the capacity to be retrofitted with newer systems to maximize the potential energy savings that new construction can offer. If a community can take the saying by Elefante (2007) that “the greenest building is the one that is already built” as a tagline for development, then they can look to improve the economic quality of these buildings, as well as the environmental quality. As sustainable measures are an ever growing concern in modern day planning, using existing infrastructure can become a strategy not only to improve the aesthetic quality of communities, but also avoiding the loss of materials that comes with demolition, and also the energy used in demolishing and rebuilding.

Utilizing these existing historic buildings as a sustainable initiative can also benefit the economic qualities of them. If a building is retrofitted to be up to the standard of new construction, than the building will attract development in either its current use, or find an adaptive reuse for the building. Ryberg-Webster (2013) showed that there are financial incentives that work to rehabilitate downtowns across the country by using federal rehabilitation tax credits. Once again the ability to receive federal money for these types of projects is 100% dependent on the building being historically significant. One way around this is, if a building or area is historically significant on the state or local level, there is an opportunity for developers to receive state funded rehabilitation tax credits. Of course this is also completely dependent on whether or not the state has a historic tax credit program.

One possible threat to the RTC programs is that, theoretically they can be administered without the planner. All it would take is for a private developer to come in and make sure that they renovate accordingly with the rules and regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act and they can be on their way. Although this is a possibility, there is still a role for the planner. In order for the developer to come in and rehabilitate, the city needs to have regulations under control

on what can go where. The city needs to understand that proper planning is vital to the future of economic development in a city. If the city puts a segment into their master plan for the advent of historic preservation and economic development, what needs to follow is a zoning regulation, to make sure that what they want to happen can physically transpire.

Lastly, these economic development projects can have a great effect on cities in older parts of the country. Mill towns are specifically showing to adapt these historic buildings that were once great manufacturing factories into modern day uses. Brietbart and Stanton (2007) looked at the historic mill city of Lowell, Massachusetts and showed how these mill buildings can change the look and feel of a city. Using infill development techniques with existing buildings such as mills in downtowns can create attraction for investment. One way that Lowell is using these buildings is by promoting the creative arts within their community, and using the arts to revitalize their downtown. By having this type of economic strategy in place, these structures can form a type of cluster development where business owners and artists can congregate and share ideas more freely than if they were more spatially separated.

Using these structures for economic development purposes does not have its detractions, installation of modern day infrastructure to comply with building codes can be costly. The addition of possible contamination of these sites from their previous uses, and without grants for brownfield redevelopment, these costs could be extremely high. Making sure that these buildings are safe for people to inhabit them, and also efficient so that they are not actively polluting the earth is very important.

This brings us to the social equity side of historic preservation, as shown in Fein's article (1985), the historic districting of communities has an effect that may be undesirable, gentrification. Because these historic districts are usually occupied by low-income and minority residents, the fact that this designation has come upon them generally attracts investment from the private real estate sector. When this type of investment comes in and revitalizes these communities, they become more desirable, and due to the rehabilitation, the property taxes and market values of the buildings often price out the residents of the community that ironically, made it historic.

One alternative to gentrification and displacement is the adaptive reuse of historic buildings mentioned in Rybert-Webster's article (2007), she writes that when a nonresidential building gets adaptively reused into residential units, that there is actually an addition of affordable units into



the housing stock of a city. This is due to the fact that these buildings are simply adding housing and not replacing any. In order for a city to make sure that there are a mix of housing types going into these buildings such as affordable units, they must plan accordingly, making regulatory requirements in new developments, such as affordable housing. It seems that although historic districts may displace people, adaptive reuse may be an inclusionary practice to helping the low-income residents live affordably. These buildings seem to also have an outcome that shows that residents are more likely to have a positive sense of place when they know the buildings surrounding them, unlike new construction (Bullen, Love, 2011).

After researching these topics and learning about them in my three courses, I think that there is an incredible value in historic buildings and districts throughout a city, and especially in the downtown. So many cities are struggling right now in the United States because of the modern shift away from industry and manufacturing in their downtowns. This is leaving vacant buildings that carry so much potential for rehabilitation of neighborhoods, and the revitalizations of the downtown. I recognize that there are bumps along the way of all of these methods of revitalization, and that there is no easy way to save a building, but when motivated people get involved in projects, great things happen. Using historic preservation as a strategy to revitalize a city has made me think of old buildings in a much different way than when I started this project. Instead of blight and contaminated, I now see uniqueness and opportunity.

## Conclusion

Now that I have taken these courses I have gained specific information on two different subsets of planning that I didn't have much education on. I have learned the beginnings of historic preservation from the early days of monument preserving, to the architectural standards of modern preservation. I have learned different ways for cities to be sustainable such as by using passive house construction techniques, where the insulation of a house is optimized and the heating and cooling of houses is more efficient. In downtown revitalization I learned how town services such as town halls, libraries, and post offices are integral to bringing people into the downtown for reasons other than to shop and be entertained.

Some things that surprised me was that the majority of the buildings that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are privately owned and managed. It also surprised me that any person can nominate a building for historic designation, and as long as that person has enough

information and writes it accordingly to the proper authority, the building has a chance to be designated. I was not disappointed with any of the courses, but there were some topics that I wish were discussed more, such as the different architectural styles of buildings from historic preservation. A lot of the coursework was about rural communities due to the location of Amherst, and I would have liked to talk about larger urban areas in the downtown course, as opposed to primarily New England town centers. These courses gave me perspective on three different subject matters, and this research paper allowed me to integrate the three topics into one sustainable strategy.

After researching all of these topics, and focusing on historic preservation as a catalyst factor in these strategies, I could very much see myself working in the preservation field. In my future I plan on furthering my education, and what I see myself studying is architecture, historic preservation, or urban design. All three of these focuses are a part of architecture and I may very well pursue a mix of all of them. This project on historic preservation has taught me that I have a very big interest in old buildings, and knowing their history, and using it, is invaluable to communities.

Overall this process has helped me understand the different roles that different types of planning can contain. Using historic preservation to promote environmental sustainability can lead to many different endeavors for these buildings, giving the community economic development and housing opportunities. Historic preservation incentives are there and have been shown throughout this paper, but there is more potential for financial incentives if the buildings or districts can be designated onto a list of historic significance. Finding creative and innovative ways to incorporate historic preservation tactics could lead to downtown revitalization and an environmentally aware community.

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